



Written by [Luis Miguel](#) on December 3, 2021

Democrats' Cozy New Relationship With Walmart

It wasn't long ago (2008 to be precise) that Joe Biden traveled to Iowa and, in front of a crowd, scathingly attacked Walmart, the biggest private employer in America.

"My problem with Walmart is that I don't see any indication that they care about the fate of middle-class people," Biden said that day.

But 15 years later, the [relationship](#) between the retail supergiant and the Democrat Party has done a 180-degree turn. The company that once donated overwhelmingly to Republicans and that was frequently the target of liberals' attacks has now adopted leftist-friendly policies and earned the praise of the White House's current occupant.



AP Images

"Thank you. You've been really — really cooperative," Biden told Walmart at the beginning of this Christmas season. "I can't tell you how much we appreciate it."

Biden also joked that he had "spent more time walking through the aisles of Walmart than I want to admit." On Wednesday, he affirmed that the White House is collaborating with Walmart on supply chain issues. The praise goes both ways. On two occasions, White House chief of staff Ron Klain has tweeted out Walmart CEO Doug McMillon's praiseful remarks as evidence of Biden's success.

Politico notes:

The administration has also promoted Walmart's efforts to support Afghan refugees. Press secretary Jen Psaki noted that she ordered her Covid at-home tests from Walmart. And in selling the Build Back Better agenda, the White House has at least three times sent out Walmart's lukewarm endorsement of the climate provisions before Congress, including those in the budget reconciliation and infrastructure bills.

... But the friendly rapport with Democrats is also the result of Walmart's attempt to use corporate initiatives to make inroads with the party, according to four people close to the company. A small fleet of lobbyists has been doing the company's bidding in Washington, and at least the past two lead in-house lobbyists have both been Democrats.

"We're glad policymakers view Walmart as part of the solution to national issues like climate change, pandemic response, and workforce development and training," Walmart Chief Communications Officer Brian Besanceney said in a statement.

The political donations coming out of Walmart have certainly shifted in favor of Democrats in recent years. The retailer's PAC gave \$1.32 million to Republicans compared to just \$358,500 to Democrats in the 2004 cycle. In 2020, that number evened out to \$596,000 to both parties.



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Many Democrats had once refused to accept donations from Walmart, but that has changed in recent cycles. It doesn't hurt that the company has begun bankrolling pet causes among the party's progressive wing.

In 2018, for example, Walmart announced that it would give \$2 million in grants to the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation and the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute to help a younger generation of non-white candidates. The move earned praise from Representatives Sheila Jackson Lee (D-Texas) and Joaquín Castro (D-Texas).

Moreover, members of the Walton family have individually supported Democrats. In May, Christy Walton gave \$50,000 to the anti-Trump Lincoln Project. In October 2020, Alice Walton gave \$300,000 to the pro-Biden SuperPAC Unite the Country.

"When you have the kind of influence that they do, it came as no surprise to start seeing their CEO being a friendly fixture in the White House," said Tracy Sefl, a longtime Democrat operative who once worked for a group that helped organized labor rein in Walmart.

Some in the pro-labor wing aren't keen on the party's newfound closeness with Walmart.

"We need our elected officials to stand with the essential workers that are keeping our country running," says Bianca Agustin, corporate accountability director at United for Respect, an advocacy group for Walmart and Amazon employees."

Agustin adds, "We need regulations and laws in place to make McMillon, who leads the largest private workforce in the country, implement the changes that Walmart associates have been demanding."

Walmart has embraced ObamaCare and leaned on the federal government to subsidize its workforce's healthcare costs. Both Barack and Michelle Obama have visited Walmarts in different states.

While visiting a location in Mountainview, California, then-President Obama praised the company for its efforts to use renewable energy, joking that "Walmart's pretty good at counting its pennies."



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